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by

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**EvoLesson: Creating and Marketing a Lesson Planning Application for
Standards-Based Education**

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Report

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Abstract

EvoLesson: Creating and Marketing a Lesson Planning Application for Standards-Based Education

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The principal objective of this report is to conceptualize and articulate a product plan for EvoLesson, a hosted application for supporting the implementation of the standards-based lesson cycle. EvoLesson is a lesson planning application that supports the creation of efficient, effective and aligned assessments and daily lesson plans without restricting teacher autonomy. EvoLesson's lesson design process creates shared resources for objective driven, backwards-planned lesson development that facilitates the creation of teacher-generated daily objective student mastery data.

EvoLesson's mission is to provide public school teachers and administrators with a platform to find, create, edit and share lesson planning resources and generate student data to improve teacher effectiveness and drive student performance. EvoLesson was created as a means of solving the daily challenge teachers face in attempting to implement standards-based lesson plans effectively. EvoLesson's teacher centered design creates values for both teachers and administrators by offering the following lesson planning benefits to impact student achievement.

EvoLesson addresses the critical need of providing teachers and administrators with essential resources to support effective planning and drive student achievement. EvoLesson is positioned to compete in the rapidly growing education technology market, with specific emphasis on the content and instructional support segments. This report outlines a comprehensive strategy for marketing EvoLesson to both teachers and school districts.

EvoLesson's future role in providing critical support for the implementation of standards-based learning has wide-ranging education policy implications, including increased student performance, improved teacher quality, and data support for improved teacher evaluation methods. At the state level, the ability to aggregate daily objective student mastery data can provide quality data feedback on standards alignment and testing.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	ix
List of Illustrations	x
Chapter 1: <i>Product Description</i>	1
The Need for the EvoLesson Approach	2
The EvoLesson Lesson Planning Application	5
Value for Teachers and Administrators	10
Chapter 2: <i>Impact on U.S. Education</i>	12
Improve Student Performance	15
Improve Teacher Quality and Performance	16
Support Teacher Evaluation	18
Provide Quality Data Feedback on Standards Alignment and Testing	20
Cost Savings to District	22
Chapter 3: <i>Business Model</i>	23
Chapter 4: <i>Market and Industry Analysis</i>	26
Market Trends	28
Chapter 5: <i>Customer Strategy</i>	32
School Districts	32
Teachers	34
Chapter 6: <i>Competitive Analysis</i>	37
Instructional Support	38
Content	39
Platforms and Administrative Support	40

Chapter 7: <i>Financial Plan</i>	42
Appendix: Income Statement and Cash Flows (by month)	45
References	52

List of Tables

Table 1: Offerings and Sales Strategy	25
Table 2: Education Technology Market Segments	27
Table 3: National Secondary School Enrollment (2011-2012).....	27
Table 4: Four Year Projection.....	43

List of Figures

Figure 1: The Lesson Planning Cycle	3
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List of Illustrations

Illustration 1: Generate and personalize the unit calendar view	6
Illustration 2: Select daily objectives	7
Illustration 3: Select or upload assessment questions	8
Illustration 4: Review lesson and generate assessment.....	9

Chapter 1: *Product Description*

EvoLesson is a hosted lesson planning application that supports the creation of efficient, effective and aligned assessments and daily lesson plans without restricting teacher autonomy. EvoLesson's lesson design process creates shared resources for objective driven, backwards-planned lesson development that facilitates the creation of teacher-generated daily objective student mastery data.

EvoLesson utilizes a workflow approach to enable teachers to find, create, edit, and share aligned lesson plans that coincide with each step of the backwards-planned lesson planning process. From the creation of written daily objectives derived from state standards to the creation of aligned assessment questions to measure student learning, EvoLesson provides teachers and administrators a platform for comprehensive lesson planning. Unlike other lesson planning products, EvoLesson's platform is designed to mirror the planning process teachers use daily. The result is an intuitive lesson planning platform that provides teachers with a practical and efficient tool for lesson planning.

By utilizing the EvoLesson approach, teachers can create individual assessments aligned to state standards. This provides a platform for providing meaningful integration of student assessment data into the classroom teaching and lesson planning process. Teachers and administrators are able to view student mastery data that ties back to specific daily objectives. This approach provides teachers with real-time feedback of student mastery, allows them to better differentiate for student needs, and enables teachers and administrators to refine teaching and lesson planning practices to drive student achievement. For the first time, teachers will be able to generate, review, and

utilize student mastery data at the daily objective level.

The Need for the EvoLesson Approach

EvoLesson’s mission is to provide public school teachers and administrators with a platform to find, create, edit and share lesson planning resources and generate student data to improve teacher effectiveness and drive student performance.

EvoLesson was created as a means of solving the daily challenge teachers face in attempting to implement standards-based lesson plans effectively. A standards-based lesson cycle is defined as an ongoing teaching and learning cycle that ensures all students learn and can demonstrate proficiency in their district’s adopted content standards and associated assessments.¹ In order to plan effectively, teachers must address each aspect of the objective-driven lesson cycle (Figure 1).

To realize the impact of this approach to learning, teachers must incorporate each aspect of the lesson planning cycle to ensure that all students are mastering state learning standards and objectives. Doing so requires a backwards planning approach to lesson planning. Backwards planning requires that teachers decide what a student needs to know and how they are going to demonstrate that learning before thinking about content delivery.

¹ Benson, David J. “The Standards-Based Teaching/Learning Cycle.” The Colorado Coalition for Standards-Based Education. 2008.

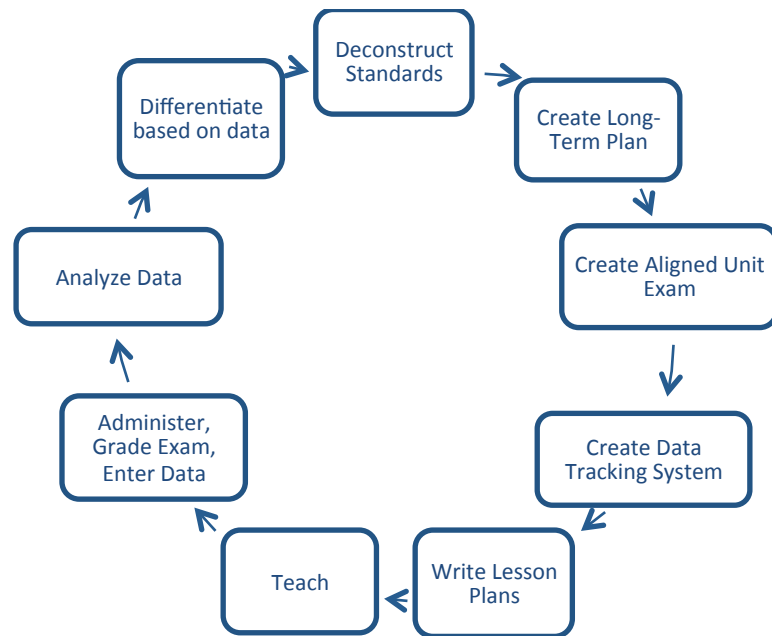


Figure 1: The Lesson Planning Cycle

Most teachers and administrators understand the need for a backwards-planned approach to creating aligned lesson plans. In order to backwards plan, teachers should begin their planning by breaking down state standards and creating a long-term, or unit, plan for teaching each of those standards. When deciding how to execute their long-term plans, teachers should create daily objectives derived from the larger state standards and then formative and daily assessments to assess whether or not students mastered the objective. Effectively, teachers must decide what to teach, how to measure student learning, and then how to actually teach it. Only after this process is complete, can teachers create fully aligned daily lesson plans that make up the bulk of their curriculum.

This backwards-planned approach is critical to objective-driven learning. Unfortunately, even the best and most experienced teachers do not have the time or resources to model this approach for their students. In the context of a teacher's day, the

vast majority of their time is spent teaching in front of students. On average, U.S. teachers are allocated only three to five hours per week of planning time.² During this time, they must also complete all of the tasks and responsibilities required of a teacher; of which preparing lesson plans is only a small part.

These restrictions force most teachers to invert the process. In the face of immediate pressure to have lesson plans, teachers often work off of a general unit plan and create lesson plans on a day-to-day basis. Frequently, they do not settle on a formative assessment until the middle or end of a unit. This approach undermines the purpose of objective-driven learning, with teachers operating with just-in-time lesson plans. For the purposes of tracking mastery, objectives and state standards are often assigned to assessment questions well after lessons have been taught.

In addition to undermining the effectiveness of objective-driven learning, this inverted process can also put a strain on the relationship between administrators and teachers. In an effort to improve teacher quality, there is an overriding push to increase administrator involvement in professional development and teacher evaluation. In order to provide feedback on daily objectives and lesson plans, administrators expend valuable resources attempting to track down teachers' plans and then provide feedback in time for them to implement the changes in their classrooms. Frequently, teachers do not have plans available far enough in advance or do not trust administrators to provide feedback in a timely enough matter to make changes. EvoLesson enables teachers to plan ahead and provides a real-time portal for administrators to view and comment on lesson plans.

² Darling-Hammond, L., Wei, R., & Andree, A. (2010). How High-Achieving Countries Develop Great Teachers. *Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education*.

EvoLesson's lesson planning process allows for real-time student mastery data at the daily objective level. Currently, reliable student mastery data is available to teachers and administrators at the end of the year. Typically, this data is derived from state exams or a school- or district-produced end of course exam. By the time this data is available, the school year is coming to an end, and it is no longer actionable.

This puts the pressure on teachers to create actionable data through the backwards planning process. Unfortunately, as discussed above, teachers do not have the time or resources to effectively create and implement aligned lesson plans, much less format, enter, and analyze student data throughout the school year. While many school districts provide data management tools, teachers or administrators still have to produce curriculum materials independently and enter and manage the data. This leads to low usage statistics in many schools and districts.

The EvoLesson Lesson Planning Application

The EvoLesson application utilizes a five-step process to creating fully aligned lesson plans. This process allows teachers to populate a unit planning calendar with every aspect of the lesson cycle. At the conclusion of the process, teachers are able to export aligned formative and summative assessments. The six-step process is detailed below.

1. Generate and personalize the unit calendar view. Teachers log in to a secure site to access their personal settings and course schedules. At the homepage, teachers can personalize the unit calendar view to include the unit title, dates, and a generated bank of daily objectives that coincide with the selected unit. The unit

calendar forms the basic interface through which teachers create and modify all aspects of the lesson cycle.

The screenshot displays a unit calendar interface for Unit 3 (1450-1750). The interface is organized into a grid of lessons, each with a number and a description of the objective. The lessons are arranged in a 4x5 grid, with the first row containing lessons 7 through 11, the second row 14 through 18, the third row 21 through 25, and the fourth row 28 through 31. Each lesson cell includes a 'View Lesson' link and checkboxes for 'Test Question' and 'Lesson Plan'. The lessons are color-coded: lessons 7-10 are red, lesson 11 is green, and lessons 14-18 are white. The sidebar on the right includes fields for 'Unit Begin Date' (01/07/2013) and 'Unit End Date' (02/15/2013), and an 'Export Assessment' button. The bottom section shows a list of objectives for the unit, including 'SWBAT identify the political, religious, and technological factors that promoted European exploration', 'SWBAT identify and explain the impact of prominent Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch explorers', 'SWBAT explain how European exploration spurred the commercial revolution', and 'SWBAT compare Spanish and Portuguese exploration and colonization'.

Illustration 1: Generate and personalize the unit calendar view.

2. Select daily objectives. Teachers will select from a list of daily objectives aligned to state standards. Teachers will also have the option of writing and uploading their own daily objectives. Once selected, the selected daily objectives populate the unit calendar.

The screenshot displays a curriculum management interface. At the top, a navigation bar shows six units: Unit One, Unit Two, Unit Three (highlighted), Unit Four, Unit Five, and Unit Six. Below this, a section titled "Unit 3 - 1450-1750" contains a grid of 31 daily objective cards. Each card is numbered and includes a "Test Question" checkbox and a "Lesson Plan" checkbox. Cards 7, 8, and 9 are red; card 10 is green; and the others are white. Some cards have descriptive text, such as "SWBAT identify the political, religious, and technological factors that promoted European exploration" on card 7. To the right of the grid, there are date pickers for "Unit Begin Date" (01/07/2013) and "Unit End Date" (02/15/2013). Below the grid is an "Export Assessment" button. At the bottom, a tabbed interface shows various topics: Exploration, Columbian Exchange (selected), Transatlantic Slave Trade, Ottoman Empire, Ming China, and European Commercial Revolution. A list of objectives for the "Columbian Exchange" tab is shown below the tabs, with "SWBAT analyze the impact of the Columbian Exchange on American and European societies" highlighted.

Illustration 2: Select daily objectives.

3. Select or upload assessment questions. After selecting daily objectives, teachers can access a list of shared assessment questions that align specifically to that daily objective, or generate and upload their own assessment question. Some assessment questions will be preloaded, but most will be user-generated. Only aligned assessment questions used by other teachers to teach a specific daily objective will appear. After selecting an assessment question, teachers label the question as a formative assessment question or summative assessment question.

The screenshot displays the 'Lesson Planner' web application interface. At the top, a navigation bar includes links for 'Unit Plan', 'My Assessments', 'My Courses', 'Standards', and 'Share'. The user's name, 'Michael Franco', and school, 'Roma High School', are shown in the top right corner next to a profile icon.

On the left side, there are three dropdown menus for selecting course details: '10th Grade World History', 'Unit 3 - 1450-1750', and a date '01/10/2013'. Below these is a text area labeled 'Objective' containing the text: 'SWBAT analyze the impact of the Columbian Exchange on American and European societies'.

The main area is divided into two columns: 'Align Assessment Question' and 'Align Lesson Plan'. Each column contains three identical, vertically stacked panels. Each panel has two buttons at the top: 'Browse Assessment Questions' and 'Upload Assessment Question' (or 'Upload Assessment Plan' in the lesson plan column). Below the buttons is a large empty rectangular box for content. At the bottom of each panel is an 'Assessment Type' dropdown menu and a 'Select Question' checkbox.

Illustration 3: Select or upload assessment questions.

4. Select or upload lesson plan. On the same page, teachers can access shared lesson plans that align to the assessment question and daily objective. Only lesson plans that have been used to teach both the selected daily objective and assessment question will appear for selection.
5. Review lesson and generate assessment. Once assessment questions and lesson plans are selected, they are stored in the application and can be accessed by teachers or administrators through the unit plan view. After the unit plan is completed, teachers can export a formatted assessment to a Word file.

Unit One Unit Two Unit Three Unit Four Unit Five Unit Six

Unit 3 - 1450-1750

7 ☒ Test Question ☒ Lesson Plan SWBAT identify the political, religious, and technological factors that promoted European exploration View Lesson

8 ☒ Test Question ☒ Lesson Plan SWBAT identify and explain the impact of prominent Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch explorers View Lesson

9 ☒ Test Question ☒ Lesson Plan SWBAT explain how European exploration spurred the "commercial revolution" View Lesson

10 ☒ Test Question ☒ Lesson Plan SWBAT identify the products exchanged between the Western and Eastern hemispheres View Lesson

11 ☒ Test Question ☒ Lesson Plan SWBAT analyze the impact of the Columbian Exchange on American and European societies View Lesson

14 ☐ Test Question ☐ Lesson Plan View Lesson

15 ☐ Test Question ☐ Lesson Plan View Lesson

16 ☐ Test Question ☐ Lesson Plan View Lesson

17 ☐ Test Question ☐ Lesson Plan View Lesson

18 ☐ Test Question ☐ Lesson Plan View Lesson

21 ☐ Test Question ☐ Lesson Plan View Lesson

22 ☐ Test Question ☐ Lesson Plan View Lesson

23 ☐ Test Question ☐ Lesson Plan View Lesson

24 ☐ Test Question ☐ Lesson Plan View Lesson

25 ☐ Test Question ☐ Lesson Plan View Lesson

28 ☐ Test Question ☐ Lesson Plan View Lesson

29 ☐ Test Question ☐ Lesson Plan View Lesson

30 ☐ Test Question ☐ Lesson Plan View Lesson

31 ☐ Test Question ☐ Lesson Plan View Lesson

1 ☐ Test Question ☐ Lesson Plan View Lesson

Export Assessment

Exploration Columbian Exchange Transatlantic Slave Trade Ottoman Empire Ming China European Commercial Revolution

Objectives

SWBAT identify the products exchanged between the Eastern and Western hemispheres

SWBAT analyze the impact of the Columbian Exchange on American and European societies

SWBAT define Columbian Exchange

SWBAT explain the long-term and short-term effects of the Columbian Exchange on European and American societies

Illustration 4: Review lesson and generate assessment.

6. Analyze student mastery data. Although not a data management system in the traditional sense, EvoLesson provides a platform for student mastery data feedback. Once teachers have planned a unit, the exported assessment is organized by objective and the day the lesson objective was taught. Using a standard scantron system, teachers can quickly grade and import student mastery data. Student performance on a particular assessment question will appear on the calendar date corresponding to the day the lesson was taught. This view allows teachers and administrators to evaluate the effectiveness of specific lessons, differentiate for individual students based on mastery, and modify future plans to better meets the needs of students.

Value for Teachers and Administrators

EvoLesson is unique in the sense that is a product built for teachers that also creates value for administrators. EvoLesson's teacher centered design creates values for both teachers and administrators by offering the following lesson planning benefits to impact student achievement.

- A comprehensive approach to the standards-based lesson cycle – EvoLesson allows teachers to constantly create and modify lesson plans in the context of the entire lesson planning cycle, including assessment creation. Creating quality formative assessments at the beginning of content units is one of the most difficult and time consuming aspects of lesson planning. EvoLesson enables teacher to engage in continuous objective-driven lesson planning and teaching to drive student achievement.
- Efficient and effective creation of lesson plans – Even in schools that prioritize collaboration and planning, teachers have very limited preparation time. Teachers using EvoLesson are able to plan and create materials to support the entire lesson cycle in a fraction of the time. This frees them up focus on delivering content and differentiating for individual student needs.
- An intuitive, workflow design made for teachers – Most instructional support programs require an increased investment in teacher time and resources. EvoLesson is designed by teachers and utilizes a workflow approach already being used by teachers to design their own lessons.

- A platform for purposeful lesson sharing and collaboration – Although lesson sharing platforms are in use already, they are not incorporated into the entire lesson cycle. EvoLesson utilizes share elements but narrows results to only display aligned assessment questions and lesson plans.
- Instructional resources that support teacher autonomy and creativity – Teachers rarely use rigid or top-down curriculum programs effectively. EvoLesson supports teacher autonomy by allowing teachers to upload or select shared lesson elements to support their own teaching style and the needs of their students.
- Data integration at the daily classroom level – The ability to view daily objective student mastery data enables teachers to differentiate for student needs and constantly analyze and improve their own effectiveness.
- An easy platform to support teacher professional development – The EvoLesson platform allows administrators to access teacher calendars and lesson plans. This allows them to better support teachers, to tailor professional development to teachers' needs, and to work with teachers to evaluate student mastery data. When used by both teachers and administrators, EvoLesson becomes a collaborative tool to drive teacher development and student achievement.

Chapter 2: *Impact on U.S. Education*

States have invested billions of dollars in the promise of standards-based education. Essentially, states are creating a general set of standards of what our students should learn, guiding teachers in their development of learning objectives to be taught in classrooms all over the country, and then evaluating students on their mastery of those standards.

Standards-based learning is an important step in driving education quality and access throughout the country. This approach continues to grow in influence with the development and widespread adoption of the Common Core Standards. When practiced properly at the district, school, and classroom level, standards based learning is a powerful tool for driving student learning and achievement.

National and state policymakers have focused primarily on developing the content and structure of individual state and Common Core Standards. Implementation of the standards has been pushed down to the local level. Specifically, the responsibility for interpreting and transforming the standards into teachable daily objectives belongs to individual teachers. In order to realize the benefits of standards-based learning, teachers must incorporate the standards into every aspect of the nine-step lesson planning cycle.

State level policymakers merely decide what students should learn. Teachers must decide what to teach, how to teach it, then teach the content and assess whether or not students mastered the material. Consistently practicing this approach requires a high level of content knowledge, pedagogy skills, and planning time. At the end of the year,

teachers are evaluated on how well they were able to execute this approach, often in the form of student performance on high stakes standardized assessments.

Unfortunately, the demands on teacher time make consistent standards-based lesson planning improbable, if not impossible, for most teachers. American teachers spend more time in front of their students and have less individual planning time than any other developed country. On average, American teachers spend over 80% of their work time in instruction, as compared to 60% for teachers in other OECD nations.³ In the forty-five minutes of planning time the average teacher is allotted each day, they must complete a host of administrative tasks in addition to lesson planning. This leaves little time to plan for their classes or to seek out resources or content that may improve their teaching. Not only does this limit the teacher's ability to impact student performance, it contributes to teacher burnout and low teacher retention.

Essentially, we are requiring that teachers do more without providing sufficient planning time or professional development resources. The resulting time constraints and institutional pressure cause the lesson planning process to become inverted. Rather than breaking down state standards and creating aligned assessments first, teachers deliver daily lesson plans and worry about assessments and alignment to standards later. Put another way, teachers are often teaching, then figuring out what they taught, and then attempting to assess if students learned what they were supposed to have taught in the first place. If data analysis software is available, teachers have access to student mastery data that tells them little about student mastery or the effectiveness of their instructional

³ Darling-Hammond, L., Wei, R., & Andree, A. (2010). How High-Achieving Countries Develop Great Teachers. *Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education*.

methods. This process is not only harmful to student learning, it contributes to teacher dissatisfaction with data based teacher evaluation methods.

This is not an indictment on teacher quality or effort, nor is it an indictment on standards-based learning. Rather, it is testament to a systemic failure in implementation. Without the resources to implement an aligned lesson planning cycle continuously throughout the school year, states will not realize the benefits of standards-based learning. Education policymakers are addressing this issue from a variety of policy angles, including teacher evaluation systems, investment in professional development, and better data management systems. School districts are investing in greater support staff and schools are working to increase planning and collaboration time for their teachers. These solutions are a step in the right direction, but yield only incremental improvements in student achievement.

In order to create systemic change, policymakers must address the issue from the standpoint of improving the teacher's ability to practice standards-based teaching. While states and districts have spent millions attempting to aggregate student and teacher data to understand if teachers are effective in their implementation of the standards, they have done little to improve teachers' ability to manage the critical first steps of the lesson planning process. Before teachers can effectively adjust teaching practices according to student data, they must be able to construct lesson plans that generate quality data. Teachers not only require time, they require an investment in support systems that encourage effective planning and the creation of rigorous and aligned lesson plans.

Traditionally, school districts have turned to scripted curriculum programs that ensure alignment. However, these programs restrict teacher autonomy and do not support effective differentiation according to diverse student needs. Education technology can play a vital role in supporting more effective implementation of standards-based teaching and learning without reducing the role of the teacher. Up to this point, the bulk of education technology investment has been dedicated to digitizing content or supporting data management systems. This is beginning to change as educators and developers search for ways to apply the efficiency and adaptability of technology to the needs of teachers in their efforts to implement the full lesson cycle.

Education technology solutions are mostly focused on a single piece or step in the lesson planning process. Consequently, most instructional support and content applications have had minimal impacts on the larger policy challenge of driving improvements in standards-based learning. EvoLesson was designed as a direct response to the challenges of implementing effective standards-based learning and driving student achievement. By focusing on the needs of the teacher at every aspect of the lesson planning cycle, EvoLesson can play an important role in teachers' ability to create and share lessons that improve effectiveness and student learning. By providing a comprehensive lesson planning platform to educators, EvoLesson can impact a host of larger education policy outcomes.

Improve Student Performance

EvoLesson's primary mission is to improve student performance by providing better access to lesson planning materials and more impactful student data. In order for

students to reach proficiency in all content areas and graduate prepared for college, they must receive quality instruction from an educator fully engaged in a continuous standards-based lesson cycle. By ensuring the creation of aligned lessons, providing access to innovative lesson plans used by successful teachers, and allowing real-time feedback on student mastery, teachers can drive measurable improvements in student achievement.

Improve Teacher Quality and Performance

Driving the national focus on teacher quality is the finding that teachers are the most important factor in student achievement among school-related factors.⁴ While the debate continues on the extent of that impact and the best ways to measure teacher effectiveness, it is universally recognized just how important having a good teacher in front of the classroom is to driving student outcomes. Among the factors of teacher effectiveness is the quality of lesson content and alignment. The more rigorous, aligned, and robust lessons are, the more likely students are to be engaged and learning.

EvoLesson provides important resources for teachers to access, edit, and create engaging and aligned lesson plans. By collaborating with other teachers throughout the country, teachers can access more effective lessons and supplemental materials for use in their classrooms. By interacting with their colleagues and sharing unique materials, teachers can draw on a wealth of knowledge and strategies to better impact student learning. Contrary to other curriculum programs, EvoLesson provides these resources in

⁴ Rand Education. (2012). Teachers Matter Most: Understanding Teachers' Impact on Student Achievement.

a way that encourages teacher creativity. By accessing aligned resources that are aligned to state standards, teachers can practice the full standards-based lesson cycle while selecting and tailoring materials to meet their students' specific needs.

Beyond providing teachers with effective resources for use early in the lesson cycle, EvoLesson provides student mastery data that is directly connected to the daily classroom lessons. By ensuring the completion of an aligned lesson cycle complete with standards based assessments, EvoLesson's platform is able to provide actionable student mastery data. Unlike other platforms and services, EvoLesson provides real-time data feedback that allows teachers to assess their performance and refine their lessons and methods to improve student outcomes.

Typically, teachers and administrators only have access to management data – or data that is too general or not timely enough to directly impact teaching practices. Examples of management data are student modifications, past summative test data, and daily metrics like attendance and discipline. While management data is vital to managing groups of students and understanding the makeup of the classroom, it does not provide information that informs practices at the daily objective level. While there are many systems that aggregate and present student data on summative assessments like end-of-year standardized tests, this data tells a teacher little about what a student is learning over the course the school year.

EvoLesson provides real-time feedback on student mastery of individual daily objectives. Because a teacher or administrator can tie that data back to specific lesson plans, teachers can analyze their effectiveness and refine future lesson plans to improve

student performance. More importantly, teachers have access to student formative assessment data and can differentiate for students who need remediation or more support. If teachers have to wait until the end of the year for reliable data, they lose the opportunity to react and adjust their teaching to support student growth.

EvoLesson not only provides actionable data feedback, it gives teachers ownership over the tools that generate student data. By controlling the daily objectives and assessment questions, teachers have a better understanding of the meaning and impact of the resulting data. Because teachers are involved in every step of the lesson cycle, they can better reflect on their practices.

Finally, EvoLesson is a tool that encourages directed professional development. By accessing long-term and daily lesson plans, administrators can provide targeted and timely feedback to teachers. Currently, administrators spend valuable resources attempting to track down and review lesson plans in time for teachers to implement changes in their classroom. Not only does EvoLesson provide instant access to these plans, the detailed lesson plans and real-time data feedback enable administrators to target professional development on the specific needs of their teachers. By supporting greater collaboration between teachers and administrators, EvoLesson provides increased opportunities for effective professional development.

Support Teacher Evaluation

Teacher evaluation is one of the most controversial aspects of education reform. Not only is a teacher's impact on student learning notoriously difficult to measure, but there are a number of different methods and data measures that are used to inform teacher

evaluations. The most popular evaluation systems combine some form of observational measures with student performance data. In response to calls to measure a teacher's impact on student growth, performance data is commonly used to inform value-added measures to quantify a teacher's impact on student growth.

Critics of data based evaluation and value-added growth measures point to concerns over the accuracy and relevance of the data. Typically, data used in evaluation systems is derived from end-of-year standardized assessments. These assessments provide a cumulative picture of a student's mastery of state standardizes, but it is difficult to extrapolate student growth from infrequent summative assessments.

EvoLesson's focus on aligned, formative assessment data has the potential to provide a more accurate picture of student growth and the role of a teacher in facilitating that growth. If administrators have access to formative assessment data that reflects student mastery of specific standards over the course of a year, they can model evaluation systems on specific student growth measures. By spiraling state standards between grade levels, administrators can analyze a student's mastery of related standards at the beginning and end of the year. This comprehensive picture of student mastery can provide a more accurate picture of standards-based student growth.

EvoLesson's platform also enables administrators to standardize growth measures while still allowing teachers to control the assessments that will ultimately generate student performance data. As long as teachers are using aligned daily objectives and assessment questions, they can choose the most appropriate and relevant lessons for their classrooms. By handing the responsibility for data generation over to teachers,

administrators increase teacher buy-in, eliminate data confusion, and allow teachers the freedom to make real-time adjustments according to student needs.

Provide Quality Data Feedback on Standards Alignment and Testing

The state of Texas is spending close to \$500 million dollars for the development and implementation of the state's new standardizing testing program. Pearson, the for-profit company responsible for creating the latest rounds of tests, will have received close to \$1.2 billion dollars between 2000 and 2015.⁵ Testing services have largely been exempt from statewide budget cuts, and critics argue that the money could be allocated in ways that more directly affect teachers and students. Beyond the high price tag, the state testing apparatus is being threatened by poor student performance and a lack of accountability for the test writers.

Originally, Texas' latest rounds of standardized testing required that high school students pass fifteen end-of-course exams in order to graduate on the state's recommended plan. The state's move to end-of-course exams was meant to increase rigor and refocus teaching on grade level specific content. However, in the first two years of the program's full implementation, students are struggling to pass the exams. Reacting to high-stakes test exhaustion and pushback from parents and teachers, the state legislature is considering a plan to drastically reduce the number of exams required for graduation.⁶

⁵ Machjer, Dineen. (2013, January 5). School Testing System Badly Needs Fixing. *The Austin American Statesman*.

⁶ Smith, Morgan. (2013, April 16). High School Curriculum Bill Headed to Senate Floor. *The Texas Tribune*.

While the discussion appears to revolve around the quantity of tests, few are talking about the failure rates in the context of the need to improve instruction and student performance. Because these assessments are aligned to specific content standards, there is greater pressure on teachers to align their lessons and teaching practices to the state standards. Previously, state tests focused more on skills that did not necessarily reflect a student's mastery of standards during the school year. There is now a greater need for a product like EvoLesson that provides content specific support for the creation of aligned lesson plans. The state's struggles with more rigorous assessments highlights the gap between rigorous student expectations and teacher resources and accentuates the need for increased support for standards-based teaching and learning.

Further complicating the implementation of standardized testing in Texas is the lack of data feedback to teachers regarding the alignment of their teaching practices to student performance on end-of-course exams. EvoLesson will be able to aggregate data about how teachers interpret standards into daily objectives and the frequency and level at which certain standards are taught. This data can provide insights to determine if Pearson is interpreting and testing state standards in the same manner and at a comparable rigor as teachers. Additionally, teachers will have access to a year of student mastery data that aligns to the state exams. This enables teachers and administrators to get a better understanding of student progress throughout the year and reflect on final student performance to provide informed teacher support services. By providing these critical resources, educators and policymakers can provide critical support services to improve state testing and accountability policies.

Cost Savings to District

The market for educational technology products in the United States is close to \$8 billion.⁷ In Texas alone, districts spend close to \$2.5 billion on curriculum, data and support services. The growth in instructional support and technology spending is driven by the increased demands placed on districts to comply with accountability initiatives. In an effort to manage the increased workload, districts have invested billions in an attempt to manage the lesson planning cycle to improve data analysis and drive student achievement.

The education technology market is so fragmented that many school districts spend valuable resources on each step of the lesson planning cycle. For example, it is not uncommon for a district to hire curriculum support staff to create district-wide formative assessments, purchase content specific curriculum programs, invest in multiple data management systems, a grading application, and a host of separate professional development tools. At the industry average of \$6 to \$8 dollars per student, this places an enormous financial burden on school districts grappling with widespread budget cuts.

EvoLesson provides support for seven of the nine steps in the lesson planning cycle. School districts that invest in EvoLesson would be able to eliminate redundant product offerings at a considerable cost savings to districts. This would allow districts to allocate valuable resources for other critical areas like staff support, infrastructure improvements, and supplemental student programming.

⁷ Richards, John., & Stebbins, Leslie. (2012). 2012 U.S. Education Technology Industry Market: PreK-K-12. Software and Information Industry Association.

Chapter 3: *Business Model*

EvoLesson is a product developed primarily for teachers, but it has applications for every stakeholder in the school building. EvoLesson is one of the few products in education technology that appeals to teachers and administrators, and we will seek to capture value from both parties. EvoLesson will charge schools and school districts annual license fees for use by all teachers in that school or district and offer annual subscription fees for individual teachers.

EvoLesson employs a subscription model. Pricing and product development is focused on two individual segments: school districts and teachers. School districts can range in size from single school charter districts to large urban districts with student populations over 100,000. A school district subscription includes access to the EvoLesson lesson planning tool for every teacher in the district. Additionally, teachers and administrators will have access to full data integration functionality. Data functionality allows teachers and administrators to view formative student assessment mastery data and track student performance on the EvoLesson platform. School districts in this space are typically charged on a per student basis. Additionally, school districts will receive data and technical support services as well as access to EvoLesson training materials.

Curriculum programs and data management systems with similar pricing structures are priced from \$7 to \$10 per student. Given that EvoLesson incorporates many of the services that school districts are already paying for separately, a one-year subscription for the EvoLesson service will be priced between \$9 and \$12 a student.

Individual teacher subscriptions will be offered to teachers throughout the country for an annual subscription between \$50 and \$75. Teacher subscriptions provide access to the EvoLesson lesson planning application but do not include the student mastery data services. Teachers will be able to access to full library of daily objectives, assessment questions, and shared lesson plans. EvoLesson will explore potential platforms and technologies for enabling data integration for individual teacher subscriptions in the future, but that is not part of the current business model and is not incorporated in the financial projections.

Although many companies are reluctant to sell directly to teachers, research demonstrates that more than 92% of American teachers spend their own money on their students and classrooms.⁸ Teachers spend an average of \$900 of their own funds on school supplies and instructional supplies.⁹ EvoLesson offers a time savings and lesson planning quality value to teachers, and there is an attractive market for teachers to purchase the service independent of their districts. Because teachers are more likely to pay for a yearly service than a monthly rate, only yearly subscriptions will be offered.

Final pricing for each segment will be determined through beta testing and customer interviews. Lower pricing may be offered for early adopters and early district partners. The incorporation of recurring revenues through the software as a service model provides an attractive and sustainable business model. Because EvoLesson consists of primarily user generated content, the costs of developing new content should decrease as

⁸ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). (2008). Public School Data File.

⁹ PRNewswire. (2010) NSSEA Releases Study on Teacher Spending on Classroom Materials. *National School Supply and Equipment Association*.

the company grows.

EvoLesson Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online, hosted application• No additional hardware purchase required• Compatible across all platforms, including iOS and Android
Software as a Service (SaaS) Business Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual subscription sold to school districts (\$7-\$10 per student)• Annual subscription sold to teachers (\$50 - \$70)

Table 1: Offerings and Sales Strategy

As the service grows and features are added, there are numerous opportunities for additional revenue streams. Additional features include full data integration with district student information systems, integration and marketing of content specific curriculum programs and materials, parent and student portals, and content standards mapping for student and campus performance data.

Given the long sales cycle and bureaucratic decision-making process of most public school districts, EvoLesson will initially start in charter schools and charter networks in Texas. Beyond Texas, EvoLesson will focus on creating early partnerships with small charter districts in states that have adopted the Common Core standards.

Chapter 4: *Market and Industry Analysis*

EvoLesson is an educational technology product designed to support teachers and administrators to improve student learning outcomes. The education technology market is defined as the domestic market for education software, digital content, and related services. The market is broadly defined to include software products and related platforms for use inside and outside of the classroom. The market does not include traditional technology hardware or basic services like internet access.

The U.S. market for education software and digital content is estimated at \$7.76 billion.¹⁰ The market for secondary school products (traditionally grades 6-12) is estimated at half of the total market, or around \$3.8 billion. The overall market is growing at an average rate of 3.5% annually, with varied growth rates among individual segments.

The education technology market can be divided into three major market segments: instructional support, content, and platforms and administrative software tools. Instructional support is the largest market segment and includes assessments and professional development resources. Unsurprisingly, assessments and assessment resources is the largest category within all segments. The second largest market segment is content, which consists primarily of digital information sources and prepared lesson plans. The smallest segment is the platforms and administrative support segment, which includes data management systems, central office support and student information systems. Because the EvoLesson platform addresses content, instructional support, and

¹⁰ Richards, John., & Stebbins, Leslie. (2012). 2012 U.S. Education Technology Industry Market: PreK-K-12. Software and Information Industry Association.

administrative support systems, the target market includes all three primary segments.

Market Segment	% of Total Market Revenues	2009 – 2011 Change in Revenues
Instructional Support	38%	+ 12%
Content	36%	(2%)
Platforms and Administration	26%	+17%

Source: 2012 Software and Information Industry Association. “2012 U.S. Education Technology Industry Market: PreK-12.

Table 2: Education Technology Market Segments

The U.S. market for EvoLesson consists of an estimated 27 million secondary school students. Based on enrollment numbers and an estimated price point of \$10 - \$12 per student for the initial subscription service, the total U.S school district market is between \$270 million and \$330 million. At an estimated price point of \$50, the market for teacher only subscriptions is \$92 million. The teacher only subscriptions do not contain data feedback capabilities. The total market for teacher only subscriptions is inflated due to inevitable cannibalization by district subscriptions.

School Type	Number of Schools	Enrollment	Number of Teachers
Public	24,651	25,894,158	1,680,000
Charter	4,952	557,373	24,000
Private	11,850*	818,000	139,916
Total	41,453	27,269,531	1,843,916

Source: Digest of Education Statistics 2011

*Includes secondary and combined enrollment schools

Table 3: National Secondary School Enrollment (2011-2012)

Texas is the initial target market. The state has the second highest secondary student enrollment in the country, and has an attractive and growing network of charter schools.¹¹ Along with some of the largest urban school districts in the country, Texas ranked third in new charter school openings in 2012-2013.¹² Although Texas has not adopted the Common Core standards, the size of the secondary student population and growing charter enrollment make it an attractive initial target market.

Market Trends

The confluence of technology, increased capital markets, and the larger reform movement has spurred rapid growth in the education market. Institutional reform trends like increased accountability measures, standards-based learning, and shared initiatives like the Common Core Standards have increased the need for data management and content sharing. The proliferation of charter schools and their role as early adopters of new technology and instructional programming has served to increase innovation and grow the market for new products.

These policies have placed an increased burden on educators to track student and teacher performance, to generate and manage large sets of data, and to provide a host of new resources to support teachers and administrators. Technology is playing a crucial role in managing this burden, and will continue to do so as districts and teachers demand better and more manageable tools.

¹¹ Aud, S., Hussar, W., Kena, G., Bianco, K., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., Tahah, K. (2011). *The Condition of Education 2011*. U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

¹² National Alliance for Public Charter Schools. (2012). *NACPS A Growing Movement: Americas Largest Charter School Communities*.

In addition to policy needs, greater access to technology is driving the education technology market. The ubiquitous presence of computers and broadband internet provides opportunities for expanded online and digital services. Increasingly, school districts are moving to the incorporation of tablets into the classroom. Recent initiatives by education foundations are providing support for this transition, with Apple having sold or distributed 4.5 million iPads to schools throughout the country.¹³ Even in schools with budget restrictions that may restrict the purchase of hardware, the increase in hosted services and online applications is allowing districts to access new programs while keeping costs relatively low.

These larger policy changes and greater access to technology is ushering in an irreversible shift towards digital platforms and away from traditional learning tools. As digital resources gain more of a foothold in primary and secondary education, there will be increased opportunities to address critical district needs in three key areas. The three dominant in the space are (1) supporting standards driven education, (2) providing resources for data management, and (3) creating individualized or differentiated student learning programs.

Standards-based education is the leading trend in education reform. However, it is a problem that has yet to be fully addressed by digital technology. Although there has been a movement to create platforms that facilitate standards based grading, there has yet to be any real progress on developing digital platforms that enable the creation of

¹³ Etherington, Darrell. (2013, February 28). Apple Has Sold Over 8M iPads Direct to Education Worldwide. <http://techcrunch.com/2013/02/28/apple-has-sold-over-8m-ipads-direct-to-education-worldwide-with-more-than-1b-itunes-u-downloads/>

completely aligned standards-based lesson plans. As states and districts prepare for the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, there is a significant need for aligned content and lesson planning resources.

The 2013 inBloom report on opportunities for application development identified lesson planning, instruction, and assessment as the number one opportunity area for education technology innovation.¹⁴ After a nationwide series of interviews and focus groups with teachers, principals, and counselors, integrated lesson planning and instruction resources were identified as the most pressing unmet need. Specifically, inBloom emphasized the need for applications that help teachers find and create relevant lesson plans and content, and then help to use them effectively.

The final aspect of inBloom's primary opportunity area is assessment data. Specifically, the report highlights the need for the creation of applications that enable teachers to assess student performance and progress at an individual and class level. Providing resources for data management is the fastest growing and most visible investment in the education technology space. However, most of the data management systems incorporate summative, or end-of-year, assessment data. This provides little actionable data beyond a snapshot of a student's performance at the end of the year, or a snapshot of a student's academic skills at the beginning of a school year.

Traditional data systems do not facilitate the creation of aligned assessments. Teachers are primarily responsible for writing, formatting, and then integrating assessments into data management software. While there are several popular products

¹⁴ inBloom. (2013). inBloom Application Scenarios: Opportunities for Application Development. *inBloom.org*.

that aggregate and present the data in easily digestible format, they provide no support in creating the assessments that will eventually be used to generate the data.

The next step in the evolution of data management in education is creating tools that provide teachers with the resources to generate aligned, objective-driven data through aligned assessment creation. This approach provides educators with access to reliable student performance data on the daily objective level. By accessing reliable daily objective performance data, educators can assess their teaching performance and differentiate for student needs.

The third trend in education technology is individualized or differentiated student learning programs. Personalized learning represents an attractive opportunity for developers. Digital applications provide the ideal platform for self-directed and adaptable learning programs. Advances in gaming technology and the proliferation of self-directed math and reading learning platforms have the potential to drive student learning. While these programs offer promise, distribution has been fragmented. Personalized learning programs must be more aligned to curriculum and integrated with daily classroom learning.

EvoLesson is well positioned to take advantage of these market needs and trends. EvoLesson's approach to lesson planning addresses the number one opportunity in technology and education, and is poised to address the two fastest growing areas in education technology spending. More importantly, EvoLesson is positioned to address the disconnect between the products on the market and the needs of the classroom teacher.

Chapter 5: *Customer Strategy*

EvoLesson will be marketed to two segments: school districts and teachers. Initially, the product will be offered only for use in secondary school classrooms. EvoLesson's teacher friendly interface is designed for secondary teachers who are planning for one or two subject areas only, and for a larger number of students. While there are potential applications for elementary teachers in the future, the current application is not as compatible with elementary schedules where teachers are responsible for multiple subjects. Additionally, the prevalence of scripted lessons and structured reading and math programs in elementary schools makes the elementary schools less attractive.

EvoLesson will demonstrate value by providing an application that enhances lesson planning efficiency and quality, and provides access to relevant and actionable student learning data. Initially, EvoLesson will focus on marketing to charter school networks in Texas. Charter networks are reliable early adopters of education technology and much more receptive to products and services. Examples of target charter networks are KIPP Austin, KIPP San Antonio, and IDEA Public Schools.

School Districts

School districts are the primary target market due to their size, decision-making power, and financial resources. Selling directly to districts offers the best opportunity for a wide distribution of product and the opportunity to impact the greatest number of students. Large urban school districts have a very slow buying cycle and are notoriously

risk averse in their purchase of new technologies and learning programs. Therefore, EvoLesson will focus on charter schools, large charter networks and rural districts in the first years following the product launch.

Following lean startup principles, EvoLesson will seek to partner with Texas charter schools to introduce, utilize, and refine the product. Charters are more innovative and risk tolerant than traditional districts, and are willing to try new products that offer improvements in teacher preparation and student achievement. Additionally, the buying cycle for these districts is shorter than traditional districts. Marketing to the earliest adopters may require a lower price point. Reduced revenue from early customers is an acceptable cost for the knowledge acquired from early users and additional user generated content in the form of uploaded assessment question and lesson plans.

Sales to school districts require one-on-one visits with principals and school district administrators. EvoLesson will leverage the company's existing network with charter school leaders in Central Texas and throughout the state. The company will be responsive to feedback from district administrators and teachers in order to refine the product offerings and better meet their needs. Additionally, EvoLesson will market to attendees at education and edtech conferences throughout the country.

After developing the product with charter school early adopters, the company will market EvoLesson to smaller, rural Texas districts. Rural districts often lack the curriculum and data support services of larger school districts. The company will market EvoLesson as an efficient means of giving teachers and administrators access to critical lesson planning resources and data management tools. EvoLesson's rural marketing plan

will revolve around regions, like the Rio Grande Valley in South Texas. District leadership often maintains close relationships with their rural counterparts and are much more likely to invest in technology and materials that have been successfully implemented by their neighbors. Given the availability of federal grant funds and the company's existing relationships with school leaders, the Rio Grande Valley is an attractive target region.

As sales expand to traditional districts and eventually large urban districts, EvoLesson will hire a small sales force to manage district sales and contracts. Marketing to large urban districts requires high levels of domain expertise and extensive contacts within the school districts. As the company grows, an experienced sales team offers the most efficient and effective means of reaching new customers.

Teachers

EvoLesson's sales and marketing strategy is highly dependent on teacher buy-in. As a product created to alleviate the lesson planning burden and increase the quality of their lessons, it is vital that we differentiate the product to these consumers. Teachers are familiar with a variety of lesson planning and other technology products. Many teachers have experienced a district buying cycle that has resulted in discarded curriculum products or little used software programs. Because EvoLesson is created primarily for teachers, it is important that EvoLesson demonstrate the willingness of teachers to use, and pay for, the product themselves.

Although district-wide sales are more attractive, direct sales to teachers are an important customer segment. Selling the product directly to teachers can create product

advocates within schools and school districts. Teachers communicate and collaborate extensively with other teachers, and new products or services often gain traction by word of mouth referrals among teachers. While administrators purchase products initially, teachers are often responsible for making final judgments on their effectiveness and deciding the long-term success of a new product.

Teachers will be offered a yearly subscription to the basic EvoLesson service for around \$50. This service will include the basic lesson planning application with the exception of the student mastery data feedback. Assessment grading and data feedback services are only available at the district level. To encourage adoption, teachers will be able to sign up for a free two-month trial service to experience the product. We are confident that teachers will recognize the added value of the product and its impact on their effectiveness and their student's academic success. After the two-month trial period, teachers will be required to purchase a yearly subscription.

While direct teacher sales should generate important revenue, this segment is far more valuable for product promotion and advocacy. The low price point is meant to reduce barriers to adoption, create a wider user base for the proliferation of user generated content, and create consumer advocates to market the product within school districts. Additionally, this approach encourages adoption throughout the country and magnifies the network effects of the product.

Sales of teacher subscriptions have a much lower customer acquisition cost than traditional district wide sales. EvoLesson will leverage existing relationship with secondary school teachers and market directly to teachers through traditional online

advertising and online education forums. EvoLesson's teacher marketing strategy relies on teacher networks and will offer referral benefits for teachers who refer colleagues who eventually sign up for a yearly subscription.

Finally, EvoLesson will attempt to market the product through non-traditional channels like teacher preparation programs. Potential partners include Teach For America, The New Teacher Project, and Texas Regional Service Centers. The most intriguing partnership is Teach For America. EvoLesson will leverage existing relationships with Teach For America to offer free subscriptions for all new corps members during the organization's six-week summer training institute. During these six weeks, new teachers are expected to internalize and demonstrate proficiency in the backwards planning approach to creating objective driven lesson plans. EvoLesson's process is strongly correlated with this approach. A summer institute partnership would benefit both parties. EvoLesson would provide critical lesson planning resources aligned with Teach for America's training methods while introducing the product to thousands of potential new customers.

Chapter 6: *Competitive Analysis*

The education technology competitive landscape is highly fragmented with well-established providers and a host of emerging niche companies. According to the Software and Information Industry Association, the education technology space is comprised of 581 educational companies with PreK-12 institutional sales. The market is comprised primarily of companies offering services in instructional support, content and platforms and administrative support.

EvoLesson will primarily compete with other companies in the instructional support and content market. EvoLesson will compete in the platforms and administrative support segment to the extent that EvoLesson offers the ability to create data aligned assessments and provides data feedback at the daily objective level. EvoLesson is not positioned to compete with larger data management software that focuses solely on data aggregation and dashboard displays. EvoLesson's role in the data management market is focused on data generation rather than display.

EvoLesson maintains a competitive advantage by integrating the aligned, backwards-planned approach to lesson planning with extensive lesson sharing services. Additionally, by creating an aligned process for the entire lesson plan cycle, EvoLesson provides a platform for the generation and integration of student mastery data at the daily objective level.

EvoLesson is well positioned to compete across each of the three market segments. The competitive landscape of each segment is detailed below. Some of the competitors extend across one or more of the market segments, but are classified

according to the application of their primary product offering.

Instructional Support

Instructional support is a large category that describes any service that provides support for educators through instructional coaching or related instructional materials and resources. Although originally defined as more traditional support materials like classroom equipment and materials, growth in technology has changed the face of the category. Today, the category is dominated by products that provide assessment support, standards mapping services, and professional development. This segment is particularly fragmented due to local control of professional development budgets and differences in state standards. The competitors described below are the most influential players in the Texas market.

C-Scope is a popular K-12 curriculum program aligned specifically to the Texas Education Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The program was developed by the Texas Education Service Curriculum Centers Collaborative in Texas and is sold to school districts as a systemic approach to teaching to the TEKS. The program contains full-length lessons, instructional guides, and some assessment support. Despite its growing distribution, it remains a controversial program among teachers for its rigid lesson plans, strict implementation, and lack of aligned assessments.

Pearson is a dominant player in Texas and the larger education market. Pearson offers a host of education related products to students, teachers, and districts throughout the country. In Texas, Pearson is responsible for creating and administering the state's standardized exams. Although EvoLesson has no intention of competing in the

summative assessment space, Pearson is developing and offering smaller formative assessment packages that may compete with EvoLesson's product offerings.

As the demands of standards-based instruction and accountability have increased, many school districts have turned to **in-house curriculum development**. Typically organized at the central office level, many districts now employ curriculum specialists to create formative assessments or benchmarks for all subject areas. This is an effective and relatively inexpensive method, but it typically lacks digital integration and restricts teacher autonomy. EvoLesson could also provide complimentary services and integration to in-house curriculum development given opportunities to facilitate formative assessments at the district level.

Content

The content segment is comprised of instructional material and resources specific to content delivery like textbooks, lesson plans, and other vehicles for content delivery. Although the segment is incredibly diverse, this competitive analysis focuses on two direct competitors to EvoLesson in the lesson sharing and development space.

BetterLesson is an online lesson plan and curriculum resource site. BetterLesson supports curriculum development by connecting educators across the country and allowing them to share and organize lesson plans with other educators across the country. BetterLesson operates a freemium model and generates revenue through premium services built specifically for partner school districts. BetterLesson has an extensive library of lesson plans, but they are difficult to sort through and are not attached to assessment items.

Sharemylesson is a joint venture by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and TSL Education to challenge BetterLesson in the online lesson sharing and creation space.¹⁵ Sharemylesson employs the same basic file sharing service, which allows teachers to share all aspects of a lesson plan. Like BetterLesson, sorting content can be overwhelming and it does not tie to the entire lesson planning cycle. Sharemylesson hopes to utilize its relationship with AFT to build trust and loyalty among teachers.

Platforms and Administrative Support

This market segment is primarily composed of learning management systems. Learning management systems (LMS) are software that automates the administration, tracking, and reporting of student learning. LMS companies offer a wide-range of services from student information systems to data dashboards and management platforms. Recently, many LMS companies have begun to expand their service offerings to include online learning, and curriculum planning. Typically, curriculum offerings consist of calendar or management systems, but do not offer preloaded or aligned assignments, assessment questions, or lesson plans. While the organization of data and classroom materials is streamlined, these products do not reduce the burden on teachers to upload, input, and manage the content.

Edmodo is an education specific social network designed to connect teachers, parents and students. Edmodo distinguishes itself in a crowded space by focusing on the development of social networks between teachers, parents and students. By utilizing

¹⁵ Rich, Motoko. (2012, June 18). Teacher's Union to Open Lesson-Sharing Web Site. *The New York Times*.

several different portals and personalized class and student pages, teachers can post assignments, share lesson plans, and communicate with students and parents. The site offers some lesson planning resources, but is more focused on the shared aspects of planning, grading, and classroom assignments.

Schoology is a learning management system that provides hosting services for a school's website, content and files. Schoology's value proposition is that it allows teachers to create course homepages that facilitate student and content interaction to promote student learning. Schoology offers a robust set of services, but does not offer efficient lesson planning resources.

Standards-based grading platforms like **ActiveGrade** and **Jump rope** provide standards-based feedback on student mastery data. These systems provide valuable data organization that facilitates standards-based grading and tracking. However, they require extensive data entry and do not offer assessment or curriculum building resources. Unlike EvoLesson, standards-based grading platforms increase demands on teacher time. Teachers are still responsible for content generation, formatting, and significant data entry.

Chapter 7: *Financial Plan*

EvoLesson is projected to be profitable within in month nineteen based student subscriptions totaling 16,600 students, and 300 individual teacher subscriptions. These profitability projections are based on price points of \$10 per student for school district subscriptions and \$50 for a year-long individual teacher subscription.

The largest driver of revenue is school district subscriptions. The estimates are based on a projection of serving Central Texas charter schools and three small to medium sized school districts in Texas. Teacher revenue is less significant, but is an important driver of user adoption, user generated content, and network effects associated with a growing number of teacher users in diverse areas in Texas and throughout the country. As EvoLesson scales with larger public school districts beyond 2017, revenue is projected to increase significantly.

The primary drivers of costs are salaries and basic technology support infrastructure. Costs are divided between first year start-up costs and growth/operations costs in years two through four. First year startup costs include website design costs and the costs of contracting outside developers to build a product prototype. These costs will be supported by an initial investment of \$50,000. The principle of the initial investment will be funded by the founder and small investments from the founder's friends and family. During the first year of prototype development, beta testing, and initial rollout, the founder will be working independently and drawing a small salary of \$18,000. The company headcount will grow between year two and four based on technological support and development required to integrate full student mastery data features, as well as

additional sales and management staff. By 2017, employee salaries and benefits are projected to total \$1,189,986. A month-by-month income statement and cash flow projection is available in the Appendix.

	Year One 2014	Year Two 2015	Year Three 2016	Year Four 2017
Revenue				
Average Price / Student / Mo	\$3.0	\$10.0	\$10.0	\$10.0
# of students	2,600	16,600	81,600	331,600
District Revenue	7,800	166,000	816,000	\$3,316,000.0
Teacher Subscriptions	0	300	11,000	20000
Price per subscription	-	\$50	\$50	\$50
Teacher Revenue	-	15,000	550,000	1,000,000
Total Revenue	7,800	181,000	1,366,000	\$4,316,000
Expenses				
Total Website Expenses	(\$35,700.0)	(\$34,900.0)	(\$60,000.0)	(\$170,000.0)
Total Headcount	1	4	8	14
Total Salary Expense	(\$18,000.0)	(\$339,952.0)	(\$679,904.0)	(\$1,189,986)
Total Expenses	(\$53,700.0)	(\$339,952.0)	(\$739,904.0)	(\$1,359,986)
Monthly Profit / Shortfall	(\$48,500.0)	(\$193,852.0)	\$626,096.0	\$2,956,014
Cash Balance				
Beginning Cash Balance	\$2,760.0	\$23,394.0	\$581,569.3	\$633,744.0
(+) Additional Capital Invested	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
(+/-) Monthly Profit / Shortfall	(\$1,260.0)	(\$15,746.0)	\$52,174.7	\$2,956,014.0
Ending Cash Balance	\$1,500.0	\$7,648.0	\$633,744	\$3,589,760

Table 4: Four Year Projection

EvoLesson will be seeking a \$200,000 capital investment at the beginning of year two to support the implementation of full student data mastery functionality. EvoLesson will use this investment to hire additional full-time technical staff in a accordance with

the growth schedule described above. Additional seed money will be used to support marketing and sales efforts.

Venture and angel backed investments in the education technology market have increased significantly in the past decade. Education technology companies received over \$429 million dollars in venture investments in 2011, nearly a \$300 million dollar increase from investments in 2002.¹⁶ Additionally, there is increased foundational support for education technology startups. From offering startup technical resources, business plan competition, and financial investment, foundations like the Gates Foundation and The Michael and Susan Dell Foundation are increasingly involved in supporting technological solutions to drive student foundations. Both foundations are attractive potential partners for financial investment and support.

¹⁶ DeSantis, Nick. (2012, March 18). A Boom Time for Education Start-ups. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Appendix: Income Statement and Cash Flows (by month)

	Jun-13 Month 1	Jul-13 Month 2	Aug-13 Month 3	Sep-13 Month 4	Oct-13 Month 5	Nov-13 Month 6
Revenue						
Average Price / Student / Mo	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
# of students	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
District Revenue	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Teacher Subscriptions	0	0	0	0	0	0
Price per subscription	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Teacher Revenue		\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Total Revenue	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Expenses						
Website Design	(\$3,000.0)	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Website Programming	\$0.0	(\$12,500.0)	(\$12,500.0)	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Website Development	\$0.0	\$0.0	(\$1,000.0)	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Hosting	(\$300.0)	(\$300.0)	(\$300.0)	(\$300.0)	(\$300.0)	(\$300.0)
Sales Expense	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	(\$200.0)	(\$200.0)
Marketing Expense	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	(\$100.0)
Total Website Expenses	(\$3,300.0)	(\$12,800.0)	(\$13,800.0)	(\$300.0)	(\$500.0)	(\$600.0)
Total Headcount	1	1	1	1	1	1
Salary Expense	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)
Total Salary Expense	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)
Total Expenses	(\$4,800.0)	(\$14,300.0)	(\$15,300.0)	(\$1,800.0)	(\$2,000.0)	(\$2,100.0)
Monthly Profit / Shortfall	(\$4,800.0)	(\$14,300.0)	(\$15,300.0)	(\$1,800.0)	(\$2,000.0)	(\$2,100.0)
Cash Balance						
Beginning Cash Balance	\$50,000.0	\$45,200.0	\$30,900.0	\$15,600.0	\$13,800.0	\$11,800.0
(+) Additional Capital Invested	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
(+/-) Monthly Profit / Shortfall	(\$4,800.0)	(\$14,300.0)	(\$15,300.0)	(\$1,800.0)	(\$2,000.0)	(\$2,100.0)
(+/-) Other Cash Income / Expense	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Ending Cash Balance	\$45,200.0	\$30,900.0	\$15,600.0	\$13,800.0	\$11,800.0	\$9,700.0

	Dec-13 Month 7	Jan-14 Month 8	Feb-14 Month 9	Mar-14 Month 10	Apr-14 Month 11	May-14 Month 12
Revenue						
Average Price / Student / Mo	\$0.0	\$0.4	\$0.4	\$0.4	\$0.4	\$0.4
# of students	0.0	2,600.0	2,600.0	2,600.0	2,600.0	2,600.0
District Revenue	\$0.0	\$1,040.0	\$1,040.0	\$1,040.0	\$1,040.0	\$1,040.0
Teacher Subscriptions	0	0	0	0	0	0
Price per subscription	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Teacher Revenue	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Total Revenue	\$0.0	\$1,040.0	\$1,040.0	\$1,040.0	\$1,040.0	\$1,040.0
Expenses						
Website Design	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Website Programming	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Website Development	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Sales Expense	(\$200.0)	(\$200.0)	(\$200.0)	(\$200.0)	(\$200.0)	(\$200.0)
Marketing Expense	(\$100.0)	(\$100.0)	(\$300.0)	(\$300.0)	(\$300.0)	(\$300.0)
Total Website Expenses	(\$600.0)	(\$600.0)	(\$800.0)	(\$800.0)	(\$800.0)	(\$800.0)
Total Headcount	1	1	1	1	1	1
Salary Expense	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)
Total Salary Expense	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)	(\$1,500.0)
Total Expenses	(\$2,100.0)	(\$2,100.0)	(\$2,300.0)	(\$2,300.0)	(\$2,300.0)	(\$2,300.0)
Monthly Profit / Shortfall	(\$2,100.0)	(\$1,060.0)	(\$1,260.0)	(\$1,260.0)	(\$1,260.0)	(\$1,260.0)
Cash Balance						
Beginning Cash Balance	\$9,700.0	\$7,600.0	\$6,540.0	\$5,280.0	\$4,020.0	\$2,760.0
(+) Additional Capital Invested	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
(+/-) Monthly Profit / Shortfall	(\$2,100.0)	(\$1,060.0)	(\$1,260.0)	(\$1,260.0)	(\$1,260.0)	(\$1,260.0)
(+/-) Other Cash Income / Expense	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Ending Cash Balance	\$7,600.0	\$6,540.0	\$5,280.0	\$4,020.0	\$2,760.0	\$1,500.0

	Jun-14 Month 13	Jul-14 Month 14	Aug-14 Month 15	Sep-14 Month 16	Oct-14 Month 17	Nov-14 Month 18
Revenue						
Average Price / Student / Mo	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8
# of students	16,600.0	16,600.0	16,600.0	16,600.0	16,600.0	16,600.0
District Revenue	\$13,833.3	\$13,833.3	\$13,833.3	\$13,833.3	\$13,833.3	\$13,833.3
Teacher Subscriptions	25	25	25	25	25	25
Price per subscription	\$50.0	\$50.0	\$50.0	\$50.0	\$50.0	\$50.0
Teacher Revenue	\$1,250.0	\$1,250.0	\$1,250.0	\$1,250.0	\$1,250.0	\$1,250.0
Total Revenue	\$15,083.3	\$15,083.3	\$15,083.3	\$15,083.3	\$15,083.3	\$15,083.3
Expenses						
Website Design	(\$2,000.0)	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Website Programming	(\$800.0)	(\$800.0)	(\$800.0)	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Website Development	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Hosting	(\$300.0)	(\$300.0)	(\$300.0)	(\$300.0)	(\$300.0)	(\$500.0)
Sales Expense	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)
Marketing Expense	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)
Total Website Expenses	(\$5,600.0)	(\$3,600.0)	(\$3,600.0)	(\$2,300.0)	(\$2,300.0)	(\$2,500.0)
Total Headcount	4	4	4	4	4	4
Salary Expense	(\$28,333.3)	(\$28,333.3)	(\$28,333.3)	(\$28,333.3)	(\$28,333.3)	(\$28,333.3)
Total Salary Expense	(\$28,329.3)	(\$28,329.3)	(\$28,329.3)	(\$28,329.3)	(\$28,329.3)	(\$28,329.3)
Total Expenses	(\$33,929.3)	(\$31,929.3)	(\$31,929.3)	(\$30,629.3)	(\$30,629.3)	(\$30,829.3)
Monthly Profit / Shortfall	(\$18,846.0)	(\$16,846.0)	(\$16,846.0)	(\$15,546.0)	(\$15,546.0)	(\$15,746.0)
Cash Balance						
Beginning Cash Balance	\$1,500.0	\$182,654.0	\$165,808.0	\$148,962.0	\$133,416.0	\$117,870.0
(+) Additional Capital Invested	\$200,000.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
(+/-) Monthly Profit / Shortfall	(\$18,846.0)	(\$16,846.0)	(\$16,846.0)	(\$15,546.0)	(\$15,546.0)	(\$15,746.0)
(+/-) Other Cash Income / Expense	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Ending Cash Balance	\$182,654.0	\$165,808.0	\$148,962.0	\$133,416.0	\$117,870.0	\$102,124.0

	Dec-14 Month 19	Jan-15 Month 20	Feb-15 Month 21	Mar-15 Month 22	Apr-15 Month 23	May-15 Month 24
Revenue						
Average Price / Student / Mo	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8
# of students	16,600.0	16,600.0	16,600.0	16,600.0	16,600.0	16,600.0
District Revenue	\$13,833.3	\$13,833.3	\$13,833.3	\$13,833.3	\$13,833.3	\$13,833.3
Teacher Subscriptions	25	25	25	25	25	25
Price per subscription	\$50.0	\$50.0	\$50.0	\$50.0	\$50.0	\$50.0
Teacher Revenue	\$1,250.0	\$1,250.0	\$1,250.0	\$1,250.0	\$1,250.0	\$1,250.0
Total Revenue	\$15,083.3	\$15,083.3	\$15,083.3	\$15,083.3	\$15,083.3	\$15,083.3
Expenses						
Website Design	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Website Programming	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Website Development	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Hosting	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)
Sales Expense	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)
Marketing Expense	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)	(\$1,000.0)
Total Website Expenses	(\$2,500.0)	(\$2,500.0)	(\$2,500.0)	(\$2,500.0)	(\$2,500.0)	(\$2,500.0)
Total Headcount	4	4	4	4	4	4
Salary Expense	(\$28,333.3)	(\$28,333.3)	(\$28,333.3)	(\$28,333.3)	(\$28,333.3)	(\$28,333.3)
Total Salary Expense	(\$28,329.3)	(\$28,329.3)	(\$28,329.3)	(\$28,329.3)	(\$28,329.3)	(\$28,329.3)
Total Expenses	(\$30,829.3)	(\$30,829.3)	(\$30,829.3)	(\$30,829.3)	(\$30,829.3)	(\$30,829.3)
Monthly Profit / Shortfall	(\$15,746.0)	(\$15,746.0)	(\$15,746.0)	(\$15,746.0)	(\$15,746.0)	(\$15,746.0)
Cash Balance						
Beginning Cash Balance	\$102,124.0	\$86,378.0	\$70,632.0	\$54,886.0	\$39,140.0	\$23,394.0
(+) Additional Capital Invested	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
(+/-) Monthly Profit / Shortfall	(\$15,746.0)	(\$15,746.0)	(\$15,746.0)	(\$15,746.0)	(\$15,746.0)	(\$15,746.0)
(+/-) Other Cash Income / Expense	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Ending Cash Balance	\$86,378.0	\$70,632.0	\$54,886.0	\$39,140.0	\$23,394.0	\$7,648.0

	Jun-15 Month 25	Jul-15 Month 26	Aug-15 Month 27	Sep-15 Month 28	Oct-15 Month 29	Nov-15 Month 30
Revenue						
Average Price / Student / Mo	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8
# of students	81,600.0	81,600.0	81,600.0	81,600.0	81,600.0	81,600.0
District Revenue	\$68,000.0	\$68,000.0	\$68,000.0	\$68,000.0	\$68,000.0	\$68,000.0
Teacher Subscriptions	917	917	917	917	917	917
Price per subscription	\$50.0	\$50.0	\$50.0	\$50.0	\$50.0	\$50.0
Teacher Revenue	\$45,833.3	\$45,833.3	\$45,833.3	\$45,833.3	\$45,833.3	\$45,833.3
Total Revenue	\$113,833.3	\$113,833.3	\$113,833.3	\$113,833.3	\$113,833.3	\$113,833.3
Expenses						
Website Design	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Website Programming	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Website Development	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Hosting	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)
Sales Expense	(\$2,500.0)	(\$2,500.0)	(\$2,500.0)	(\$2,500.0)	(\$2,500.0)	(\$2,500.0)
Marketing Expense	(\$2,000.0)	(\$2,000.0)	(\$2,000.0)	(\$2,000.0)	(\$2,000.0)	(\$2,000.0)
Total Website Expenses	(\$5,000.0)	(\$5,000.0)	(\$5,000.0)	(\$5,000.0)	(\$5,000.0)	(\$5,000.0)
Total Headcount	8	8	8	8	8	8
Salary Expense	(\$56,666.7)	(\$56,666.7)	(\$56,666.7)	(\$56,666.7)	(\$56,666.7)	(\$56,666.7)
Total Salary Expense	(\$56,658.7)	(\$56,658.7)	(\$56,658.7)	(\$56,658.7)	(\$56,658.7)	(\$56,658.7)
Total Expenses	(\$61,658.7)	(\$61,658.7)	(\$61,658.7)	(\$61,658.7)	(\$61,658.7)	(\$61,658.7)
Monthly Profit / Shortfall	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7
Cash Balance						
Beginning Cash Balance	\$7,648.0	\$59,822.7	\$111,997.3	\$164,172.0	\$216,346.7	\$268,521.3
(+) Additional Capital Invested	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
(+/-) Monthly Profit / Shortfall	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7
(+/-) Other Cash Income/Expense	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Ending Cash Balance	\$59,823	\$111,997	\$164,172	\$216,347	\$268,521	\$320,696

	Dec-15 Month 31	Jan-16 Month 32	Feb-16 Month 33	Mar-16 Month 34	Apr-16 Month 35	May-16 Month 36
Revenue						
Average Price / Student / Mo	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8	\$0.8
# of students	81,600.0	81,600.0	81,600.0	81,600.0	81,600.0	81,600.0
District Revenue	\$68,000.0	\$68,000.0	\$68,000.0	\$68,000.0	\$68,000.0	\$68,000.0
Teacher Subscriptions	917	917	917	917	917	917
Price per subscription	\$50.0	\$50.0	\$50.0	\$50.0	\$50.0	\$50.0
Teacher Revenue	\$45,833.3	\$45,833.3	\$45,833.3	\$45,833.3	\$45,833.3	\$45,833.3
Total Revenue	\$113,833.3	\$113,833.3	\$113,833.3	\$113,833.3	\$113,833.3	\$113,833.3
Expenses						
Website Design	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Website Programming	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Website Development	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Hosting	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)	(\$500.0)
Sales Expense	(\$2,500.0)	(\$2,500.0)	(\$2,500.0)	(\$2,500.0)	(\$2,500.0)	(\$2,500.0)
Marketing Expense	(\$2,000.0)	(\$2,000.0)	(\$2,000.0)	(\$2,000.0)	(\$2,000.0)	(\$2,000.0)
Total Website Expenses	(\$5,000.0)	(\$5,000.0)	(\$5,000.0)	(\$5,000.0)	(\$5,000.0)	(\$5,000.0)
Total Headcount	8	8	8	8	8	8
Salary Expense	(\$56,666.7)	(\$56,666.7)	(\$56,666.7)	(\$56,666.7)	(\$56,666.7)	(\$56,666.7)
Total Salary Expense	(\$56,658.7)	(\$56,658.7)	(\$56,658.7)	(\$56,658.7)	(\$56,658.7)	(\$56,658.7)
Total Expenses	(\$61,658.7)	(\$61,658.7)	(\$61,658.7)	(\$61,658.7)	(\$61,658.7)	(\$61,658.7)
Monthly Profit / Shortfall	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7
Cash Balance						
Beginning Cash Balance	\$320,696.0	\$372,870.7	\$425,045.3	\$477,220.0	\$529,394.7	\$581,569.3
(+) Additional Capital Invested	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
(+/-) Monthly Profit / Shortfall	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7	\$52,174.7
(+/-) Other Cash Income / Expense	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0
Ending Cash Balance	\$372,871	\$425,045	\$477,220	\$529,395	\$581,569	\$633,744

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